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Report of the Peacebuilding Commission

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Report of the Peacebuilding Commission on its ninth session

I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/180 and Security Council resolution 1645 (2005), in which the Peacebuilding Commission was requested to submit an annual report to the Assembly for an annual debate and review. The report will also be submitted to the Council, pursuant to its resolution 1646 (2005), for an annual debate. The report covers the ninth session of the Commission, held from 1 January to 31 December 2015.

2. On 29 October 2010, the General Assembly and the Security Council adopted resolutions 65/7 and 1947 (2010), respectively, through which the two organs, inter alia, requested the Commission to reflect, in its annual reports, the progress made in taking forward the relevant recommendations contained in the report of the co-facilitators on the review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture (A/64/868-S/2010/393, annex). Beginning with the report of the Commission on its sixth session, the implementation of relevant recommendations from the 2010 review has been mainstreamed into the reporting on the Commission's policy and country-specific activities. The structure of the three previous reports reflected this development in content and format, placing added emphasis on performance of the main functions in the specific country settings, the role of the membership, the links with parent organs and the themes explored by the Commission.

3. Furthermore, each of the previous three reports included a forward agenda to guide the work of the Commission on country-specific and policy-related engagements in the session following that covered by the report. In order to strengthen the framework within which the Commission conducts its activities, the present report is structured around the elements contained in the forward agenda of the annual report on the eighth session (see A/69/818-S/2015/174, paras. 66-72). The present report will also touch upon the 2015 review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture and how the Commission has engaged with the recommendations contained therein.

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II. Work of the Commission

4. During its ninth session, the key objectives for the work of the Organizational Committee were the following: adopting more transparent and strategic working methods within the Committee, including a more flexible agenda and increasing inclusivity; improving partnerships with regional and subregional organizations; highlighting peacebuilding needs in the Ebola recovery; and taking forward recommendations of the peacebuilding review. Among the thematic policy priority areas were financing for peacebuilding and gender issues. Several activities were undertaken to meet these objectives. The Committee had opportunities to discuss peacebuilding needs and lessons learned in several countries outside the purview of the Commission's existing agenda, including Burkina Faso, Papua New Guinea and Somalia. To advance peacebuilding within the Ebola recovery, a trip to West Africa was undertaken by the Chair, who participated in the Spring Meeting of the World Bank to draw attention to the issue. A special session on youth and peacebuilding was held in the Committee to discuss how to better include young people's perspectives.

5. Through its country-specific configurations and its broader policy advisory role, the Commission continued to carry out its three core functions of advocacy, accompaniment and sustaining attention; resource mobilization and partnerships; and forging coherence. The Commission further strengthened linkages at the country level with the programmatic activity of the Peacebuilding Fund. The Commission continued to explore ways in which to adopt more flexible and lighter working methods, including follow-up on the work of its first annual session to commemorate Peacebuilding Day[1] (in June 2014) and forging closer interaction and engagement among the relevant stakeholders in New York and those from Member States' capitals on key international peacebuilding challenges. Reflecting the convening role of the Commission as a central aspect of the exercise of its advisory function to the General Assembly and the Security Council, the Commission convened thematic and country-specific meetings at its second annual session held in June 2015. A list of the activities undertaken by the Commission will be made available in a separate document, to be posted on the website of the Commission.[2]

6. The current reporting period coincided with the 2015 review of the peacebuilding architecture, mandated under paragraph 5 of General Assembly resolution 65/7 and Security Council resolution 1947 (2010). On 15 December 2014, building on the advance preparation carried forward by the Organizational Committee, the Presidents of the Assembly and the Council transmitted to the Secretary-General the terms of reference for the conduct of the 2015 review and requested that he proceed as proposed therein. Subsequently, the Secretary-General appointed an Advisory Group of Experts on the Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture, whose report was drafted along the lines indicated in the terms of reference. The report (see A/69/968-S/2015/490) was submitted to the Assembly and the Council on 29 June 2015. On 6 July 2015, the Presidents of the Assembly and the Council appointed the Permanent Representatives of Australia and Angola as co-facilitators of an inclusive intergovernmental process established to review the

[1] See para. 14 of the declaration of Heads of State and Government of the members of the Commission, entitled "Peacebuilding: the way towards sustainable peace and security" (PBC/6/OC/6).

[2] http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/.

findings and consider the recommendations contained in the report of the Advisory Group of Experts.

7. The Commission discussed the findings and recommendations of the Advisory Group of Experts at a number of informal meetings. On 29 September, the Government of Sweden, the International Peace Institute and the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation convened a ministerial-level panel discussion entitled "Champions for a new approach to peacebuilding", highlighting "sustaining peace" as the core activity of the United Nations. On 30 and 31 October, the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation and the Peacebuilding Support Office co-organized an informal retreat at the ambassadorial level with the participation of the President of the General Assembly, the Deputy Secretary-General and other senior United Nations officials. The retreat, whose theme was entitled "Realizing the potential of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture: the 2015 review and beyond", offered an opportunity for members of the Commission to discuss the 2015 review, including key issues such as the centrality of sustaining peace, the role of the Commission in bringing intergovernmental and operational coherence to the United Nations, and the need for increased and more predictable financing for peacebuilding, including for the Peacebuilding Fund. In addition, the recommendations contained in the report influenced the work of the Commission during its ninth session. The Chair actively worked to implement the recommendations pertaining to partnership with regional actors and the adoption of more flexible modes of operation in the Organizational Committee.

A. Follow-up to the first and preparation for the second annual session (June 2015)

8. Building on the first-ever annual session of the Peacebuilding Commission (held in 2014) on "Sustainable support for peacebuilding: the domestic and international aspects", the second annual session of the Commission was organized, on 23 June 2015, to discuss "Predictable financing for peacebuilding: breaking the silos". The discussion was timely, following closely on the heels of the issuance, on 17 June 2015, of the report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations on "uniting our strengths for peace: politics, partnership and people" (see A/70/95-S/2015/446) and providing some final inputs before the finalization of the report of the Advisory Group of Experts on the Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture. The meeting provided an opportunity for Member States to develop further views ahead of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and the finalization of the Sustainable Development Goals later in 2015. The discussion benefited from statements made by the President of the African Development Bank, Donald Kaberuka, and the Deputy Secretary-General, and presentations made by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and representatives of civil society.

9. Focusing in his remarks on predictable financing and the fragmented international aid architecture, Mr. Kaberuka highlighted the need to ensure that funds were earmarked for peacebuilding. He stressed the fact that otherwise, traditional development assistance would naturally gravitate towards the rewarding of performance which is inherently weak in countries emerging from conflict. Speakers further highlighted the need to reduce supply-side fragmentation through orientation towards national programmes, including by providing resources

"on-budget" and through national institutions. To be successful, such nationally led programmes required political leadership and vision, especially as many of the institutions that needed to sustain peace, such as those covering security, justice and local governance, were of a highly political nature. The cost-effectiveness of investing in prevention was highlighted. The Peacebuilding Fund was identified as a proved instrument through which to channel such investments, and participants called for a scaling up of contributions. More attention should be paid to alternative resources for the financing of peacebuilding, including private sector capital, South-South cooperation and remittances.

10. The annual session also addressed the question of domestic resource mobilization. The discussions revealed the opportunities offered by domestic resources. Increased revenues were a key indicator of political commitment to and leadership of nation-building. It built the confidence of international actors with respect to greater investment (both public and private) and could enable the underwriting of more sustainable programmes and solutions that were led nationally. However, donors were often averse to investing in such financial systems, or limited themselves to the provision of narrow technical assistance without a political accompaniment to such processes. Several participants emphasized the need to build capacity on a subnational level for more efficient and visible collection and service delivery, while others expressed their belief that close connections might exist among domestic revenue, natural resources and corruption issues. The discussions referenced the report of the High-level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa,[3] and called for greater efforts to support the accountable management of natural resources and address issues such as trade mispricing.

11. In closing, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, Margot Wallström, in her capacity as Chair of the Commission, along with the Presidents of the General Assembly and the Security Council, highlighted the need for integrated and coherent development and security strategies in post-conflict countries as a means of addressing fragmented and siloed approaches to peacebuilding funding. In many ways, the conclusions of the Commission's annual session foreshadowed recommendations presented in the review of the peacebuilding architecture and discussed in a variety of forums subsequently through 2015. Some of the key issues included the need for increased programmatic support for building critical institutions capable of sustaining peace, whether through the budgets of peacekeeping missions, increased support to the Peacebuilding Fund or additional resources provided to countries; the need for integrated security and development strategies designed to counteract fragmentation; the need to set aside resources to ensure that peacebuilding and conflict prevention are taken into full account, including through the Peacebuilding Fund; the need to direct more funding through national institutions and in support of building national capacity, at capital and local levels, particularly in the areas of security and justice; the need for more alternative means of financing, through, for example, South-South cooperation, private sector sources, remittances and improved domestic revenues; and the need for improved communication to highlight the successes of prevention, which are not always obvious or tangible.

[3] Available at http://www.uneca.org/iff.

B. Integrate the perspectives of regional actors

12. During the reporting period, the Commission continued its efforts towards strengthening engagement with regional and subregional actors in policy-related and country-specific activities. In several of the country-specific discussions convened by the Commission, the role of neighbouring countries, the African Union, and subregional organizations has been highlighted as a crucial element as regards support to political processes and the response to potential sources of instability. Therefore, in the context of both country configuration meetings and country-specific discussions convened by the Organizational Committee, the Commission placed greater emphasis on the need to be inclusive and to actively engage with regional partners. In this connection, the Committee discussed the transition in Burkina Faso and sustainable financing for peacebuilding in Somalia. The discussions were held on the Chair's initiative and exemplified how the Commission can provide key regional partners with a platform.

13. The members of the Commission from African States continued to articulate a regional perspective on peacebuilding through the political caucus established in the previous session. There were numerous opportunities for the exchange of views on ways to integrate the perspective of regional actors in the work of the Commission, including a working luncheon organized in May by the Chair of the Commission with the caucus and representatives of the African Union Commission, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). On that occasion, several participants called for an institutional partnership between the Commission, the African Union and the African subregional organizations. Participants also noted that the recurring situations of relapse in Africa despite significant regional and United Nations investments point to the absence of critical analysis of both the root causes and the drivers of conflict on the continent.

14. A similar type of luncheon, organized in October by the Chair, together with the Chairs' Group and the countries on the agenda, represented a first opportunity to discuss with a number of representatives of regional economic communities how to establish stronger partnership between the Commission and those communities, to hear their views on the peacebuilding challenges in their respective subregions, and to discuss how the Commission can best leverage and add value to peacebuilding in their regions. Representatives from the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), ECCAS, the East African Community (EAC), ECOWAS, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union participated in the luncheon. The need for enhanced conflict prevention was highlighted especially, as was the need for predictable investments in efforts to sustain peace. Further, a need for continued dialogue on these issues was expressed by several actors.

15. The importance of the Commission's work with regional actors such as the African Development Bank and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), to enable a more coherent response to critical peacebuilding needs, was further underscored at its annual session of 23 June discussed above. The Commission also highlighted the recommendations of the peacebuilding review and the peace operations review on the importance of strengthening our links with regional organizations, including in the area of conflict prevention, inter alia, at a meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Security Council on Conflict Prevention and

Resolution in Africa, on the theme "Preventive diplomacy in Africa: the role of the African Union and its cooperation with the United Nations", at which the Chair spoke on behalf of the Commission.

16. With regard to country-specific activities, the Commission played an active and important role in fostering the provision of coherent regional support to the authorities of Guinea-Bissau for addressing the most pressing national priorities. The Government of Guinea-Bissau demonstrated ownership in setting the agenda for development with a long-term vision by developing Terra Ranka, a 10-year national development strategy focused on improving governance and access to basic services, eradicating poverty and promoting economic prospects. This was launched at the international partners' conference on Guinea-Bissau, organized in Brussels in March, reinforcing a positive outlook in respect of the country's comprehensive peacebuilding priorities. Along with the support of the Commission, $10 million in catalytic financing was allocated by the Secretary-General at the event from the Peacebuilding Fund. The Government's leadership generated trust among the members of the international community, including neighbouring countries, which translated at the Brussels conference into an unprecedented mobilization of 1.2 billion euros.

17. The commitment and determination of international partners in respect of supporting the stabilization of Guinea-Bissau in a coordinated manner was tested during the three-month impasse following the President's dismissal of the Government of the Prime Minister, Domingos Simões Pereira, in August. In this connection, the Peacebuilding Commission fully supported the mediation roles of ECOWAS and the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) in aligning the region behind a swift resolution of the crisis.

18. In Burundi, the Commission increased its collaboration and interaction with regional actors, including United Nations entities/representation and regional organizations in Africa. The Commission supported the work of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region in accompanying the electoral process in Burundi. This engagement intensified during the crisis that erupted at the end of May, with the Special Envoy regularly briefing the Commission on the situation in Burundi and on his efforts to facilitate a political dialogue during the crisis.

19. Furthermore, the Commission rallied its support behind regional and subregional initiatives on the crisis in Burundi, for example, by encouraging the implementation of decisions and recommendations taken by the Heads of State of the East African Community and by the African Union Peace and Security Council. Member States leading EAC, the United Republic of Tanzania in its capacity as Chair of EAC and Uganda in its capacity as mediator for Burundi were invited by the Commission to update members on progress made in the resolution of the crisis. Funds from the Peacebuilding Fund were allocated in support of the Commission's advocacy and the work of the African Union, including through the financing of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights which is working with African Union monitors. Funds were also allocated to complement regional efforts by the backing of national dialogue efforts through national civil society organizations, connecting various local dialogue initiatives.

20. During his visit to Burundi in November, the Chair of the Burundi configuration also visited Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania, where he

had fruitful discussions with the Minister of Defence of Uganda, Crispus Kiyonga, who was charged by the President of Uganda, Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, to lead the EAC mediation process. In Dar es Salaam, the Chair exchanged views with the authorities of the United Republic of Tanzania on the situation in Burundi. As a follow-up to his regional visit, the Chair held consultations with the World Bank and IMF in Washington, D.C.

21. In the Central African Republic, following the Bangui forum, several recommendations were adopted, identifying the short- and medium-term priorities of the transitional authorities. The Commission's Central African Republic configuration continued to encourage useful discussions among all key stakeholders with the intention of framing political consensus within the context of those priorities. In this vein, the Commission has promoted coherent efforts to strengthen national ownership and regional alignment with respect to medium- to long-term peacebuilding objectives. At the high-level meeting on the Central African Republic, convened by the Secretary-General on 1 October 2015, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Morocco, Salaheddine Mezouar, delivered a speech on behalf of the members of the Central African Republic configuration, in which he highlighted the Commission's engagement in support of the transitional political process in the country. The meeting presented an opportunity for key stakeholders, including from the subregion, to reaffirm their commitment to the Central African Republic and the restoration of long-term peace and stability in the country.

22. Furthermore, both the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and United Nations representative in the International Mediation on the crisis in the Central African Republic, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) were invited by the Commission to brief the Central African Republic configuration on several occasions. They shared with the members their valuable insights on the situation on the ground. The Commission was also active in raising awareness on the lack of funding, particularly for the elections. In this context, Peacebuilding Fund financing was allocated in support of the Bangui forum, building on regional mediation, and funds were also allocated, exceptionally, in support of the elections process at a time when lack of funding was the key obstacle.

23. The Commission consolidated its constructive relationship with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) in fulfilling its mandate in Guinea, accompanying both the electoral process and the post-Ebola recovery efforts. The Chair of the Commission travelled to the three countries affected by Ebola in May, and included a trip to Dakar, where the impact of Ebola on the political processes in the region and opportunities to harness the regional approach to post-Ebola recovery efforts were discussed with the Special Representative.

24. Furthermore, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNOWA regularly briefed the Guinea configuration of the Commission on his efforts in accompanying the dialogue process in Guinea, ahead of the presidential elections. For its part, the configuration provided advice and support to the Special Representative with respect to his role in intercountry dialogue, including through

statements by the configuration. During her trip to Guinea from the end of May to the beginning of June, the Chair of the Guinea configuration met with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. They reinforced each other's messages on the urgency of a consensus on the pending issues which were critical to a peaceful conduct of the presidential elections. The Guinea configuration of the Commission expressed its support for the agreement reached in August and, later, for the holding of the presidential elections in October in a peaceful manner.

C. Focus and sustain attention on the long-term impacts of the Ebola outbreak

25. During the reporting period, the Commission played an important role in drawing attention to the peacebuilding-related implications of the Ebola crisis, providing an intergovernmental platform for a comprehensive and long-term response. The collective and determined action taken by Member States during the very early stages of the Ebola outbreak demonstrated the ways in which the Commission could play to its political strengths. It helped generate a response from the international community and other parts of the United Nations system, particularly in respect of focusing on the risks posed by the crisis to the overarching peacebuilding gains made by the three most-affected countries. The Commission's early lead was strengthened by Peacebuilding Fund financing made available through quick reprogramming in order to fill funding gaps related to social and political tensions which were emerging despite significant resources available to Ebola-affected countries for the health response. Reprogramming in Sierra Leone supported professionalization among security actors engaged in the health response, while in Guinea, the Fund reprogrammed part of its resources to help prevent violent incidents in Ebola-affected areas, in particular Guinée forestière, which was later declared to be the first Ebola-free region in the country. The Commission followed up on the United Nations assessment on the impact of the Ebola outbreak in the areas of security, local governance, political institutions, social cohesion and economic recovery, taking into consideration a comprehensive regional and longer-term approach. As a result, the terms of reference of the Ebola recovery initiatives led by the United Nations included key areas identified by the Commission.

26. The Ebola outbreak revealed extensive and continued challenges in poverty reduction, access to education and youth employment. Therefore, it was also noted that ensuring sustainable peace in the countries affected and minimizing the risk of renewed conflict would require continued investments in these areas and in measures to reinforce trust in State institutions. The Chair welcomed the interest expressed by many stakeholders in renewed subregional cooperation, as reflected in the joint Mano River Union regional Ebola recovery strategy. The need for a more holistic and well-coordinated approach by the United Nations system and the international community (including donors) to the Ebola recovery efforts was highlighted, especially at the subsequent high-level meetings on Ebola, including the Secretary-General's pledging conference in July 2015.

27. In order to provide a more coherent response to the crisis, to keep the momentum and raise awareness on long-term peacebuilding issues in the midst of a health crisis, the Commission adopted a flexible mode of engagement which brought together the representatives of the three affected countries and the Chairs of the respective configurations within the framework of the Organizational

Committee. In this regard, the Commission, upon the Chair's return from his visit to West Africa, convened a special session on 14 April. At this special session, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) highlighted some of the gaps and challenges identified in the areas of governance, peacebuilding and core government functions within the national Ebola recovery plans, including fostering the State-society relationship, promoting civic engagement and strengthening cohesive societies which hold government to account.[4] UNDP also emphasized the importance of strengthening the articulation of the objectives of post-Ebola peacebuilding, which had been limited to security and administration in the national plans. The Commission agreed that the Chair would participate in the World Bank/IMF Spring Meetings on the Ebola recovery to convey a number of key recommendations, including the need for the international community to remain committed to Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone in order to ensure that important peacebuilding needs were addressed in the recovery phase.

28. On a number of occasions, the Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone configurations provided updates on the crisis to the wider membership. An important outcome of these discussions was the understanding that key lessons from the Ebola crisis response — including on the role of national and local community leadership and ownership, the need for a regional approach, and the opportunity for maintaining broad international engagement — should be guiding the involvement of the Commission in the Ebola recovery phase as well. National stakeholders requested that the Commission continue advocating for international attention so as to maintain the momentum and to ensure that the international community stood by its commitments and pledges. The Commission was encouraged to adopt a role in supporting key peacebuilding priorities in national recovery efforts. This required collective efforts by all of the members of the Commission in respect of promoting peacebuilding priorities in all relevant forums and working in the areas of their different comparative advantages.

29. The Ebola crisis revealed outstanding challenges related to the consolidation of peace which need to be addressed by the international community. In this connection, the informal expert-level meeting of the Sierra Leone configuration held on 21 May highlighted the important role that the Commission can play in providing policy advice and enhancing coordination with all relevant actors in efforts towards capacity-building.

30. The Commission closely monitored the ongoing recovery efforts in Sierra Leone, taking into account the political and socioeconomic developments in the country, particularly through the issuance of statements and the convening of informal meetings. In December, the Commission issued a statement of congratulations to the Government and people of Sierra Leone on their having been declared Ebola-free. Further, the informal meeting held on 7 December became a

[4] On 25 November 2014, following up on the outcome of the numerous meetings of the Commission dedicated to the fight against Ebola virus disease, the Chair addressed a letter to the Secretary-General requesting that the United Nations undertake an assessment of the impact of Ebola on post-conflict peacebuilding efforts in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. In his letter, the Chair stressed the importance attached by the Commission to the impact of the outbreak in the areas of security, local governance, political institutions, social cohesion and economic recovery. In his letter dated 17 December 2014 in response to the letter of the Commission, the Secretary-General informed the Commission that UNDP would lead the United Nations initiatives on Ebola-related recovery.

platform which brought together government representatives, the African Union, ECOWAS, the Mano River Union, the Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat/United Nations Office for West Africa, UNDP and the United Nations country team, including the Resident Coordinator a.i. The discussion facilitated a re-examination of a coherent strategy for the Commission's engagement during Sierra Leone's recovery and progress in the post-United Nations mission drawdown.

D. Improve the advisory function with regard to and the modality of interaction with the General Assembly and the Security Council

31. The Commission continued to explore ways to strengthen the advisory function with regard to and improve interaction with the General Assembly and the Security Council. It pursued three tracks in its relations with the Council, consisting in: (a) the fourth informal interactive dialogue co-organized by the President of the Council and the Chair of the Commission; (b) a periodic stocktaking, at the expert level, coordinated by Malaysia; and (c) formal briefings to the Council on country-specific and thematic issues.

32. The informal interactive dialogue between the members of the Security Council, the Chairs of the Commission and the countries on its agenda was held on 25 June. The meeting, to which the Deputy Secretary-General was also invited as a briefer, offered an opportunity to discuss practical ways of strengthening the future role of the Commission in support of the Council. Particular emphasis was placed on its advisory role once the Council has mandated a peace operation, during the drawdown and transition of a mission and beyond the lifespan of a mission. The meeting highlighted the nature of the Commission's advisory role with respect to the Council, which was centred on enhancing efforts aimed at preventing lapses and relapses into conflict. By providing context-specific and tailored advice, the Commission could ensure that national priorities were factored into the Council's mandate design and implementation. The convening role of the Commission was also underlined, it being noted that, by bringing together security and development actors, including at the regional and subregional levels, the Commission was well positioned to bring a peacebuilding perspective to the deliberations of the Council. It was noted that, within the context of a focus on the drawdown and transition phase, the Commission could play a critical role in sustaining the attention of regional organizations and international financial institutions as directed towards national peacebuilding priorities. The discussions also referred to the importance of the Commission's engagement whenever a country believed that it could benefit from international support during a political transition. With regard to the practical modalities for strengthening the advisory role of the Commission, some participants recommended more regular engagement with the Council and more forward-looking planning of field visits, ahead of the Council's discussions. As highlighted in the recommendations contained in the report of the Advisory Group of Experts on the Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture, the Peacebuilding Fund is also poised to provide support during the drawdown phase, to assist in the transfer of continuing peacebuilding support tasks from peace operations to United Nations country teams, aligned to the political accompaniment of the Commission.

33. At its formal meeting held on 11 March, the Organizational Committee elected Malaysia to succeed Rwanda as coordinator of the periodic stocktaking exercise of the Commission's advisory function with respect to and the modality of interaction

with the Security Council. At an informal expert-level meeting held on 20 November, the stocktaking exercise focused on the advisory role of the Commission in connection with the situations in Burundi, the Central African Republic, Guinea-Bissau and Liberia. The discussion highlighted the important work done by the Commission through some of its configurations and the need to keep the tenor of the relations between the Commission and the Council flexible and pragmatic. Some participants underscored the importance of reinforcing an informal dialogue at several levels in order to strengthen the advisory role of the Commission. The dialogue with the Council's presidency on the planning of forward activities can help ensure that the Commission provides its advice at the appropriate time. Some participants also expressed their view that the Commission's diverse membership and flexible outreach to regional and subregional organizations could play an important role in complementing the work of the Council in country-specific contexts.

34. In connection with thematic and country-specific briefings to the Security Council, the Commission had addressed the Council on a number of occasions. On 19 January, at the Council's debate on inclusive development for the maintenance of international peace and security, the Chair stressed the importance of inclusion as a central aspect of peacebuilding. In this connection, he noted that the Commission was well positioned to provide advice on issues that touched on the concerns of the Council and the General Assembly, such as the ways in which inclusive socioeconomic development contributes to peace and security and reduces the risk of the emergence of or the relapse into violent conflict.

35. On 17 November, the Chair briefed the Council, at its open debate on security, development and the root causes of conflict, in connection with the item entitled "The maintenance of international peace and security". In his briefing, the Chair mentioned three shifts that needed to occur in order to sustain peace. First, preventing lapse and relapse into conflict should move to the forefront of United Nations engagement, and build on the realization that building peace was primarily a political process which required sustained and long-term engagement. In this connection, the Chair noted that the process of building and sustaining peace took time and that there was a need to adjust our horizons by shifting from the standard programme cycles of from 3 to 5 years, to frameworks with a span of from 15 to 30 years. Second, he underlined that peace could only emerge from within societies, and build on inclusive national ownership. The Commission represented a unique and inclusive platform where national authorities had the opportunity to engage with international partners, including regional actors. Finally, the Chair underscored the important role that the Commission could play in facilitating a coherent approach of all international actors to effectively addressing the root causes of conflict.

36. With regard to country-specific briefings, the Chairs of the country-specific configurations provided the Council with substantive updates on key peacebuilding priorities in their respective countries. On Liberia, the Chair continued to underline the need for sustaining and strengthening peacebuilding gains, especially in light of the post-Ebola efforts and the drawdown of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). The Chair also stressed the importance of a more harmonized and integrated framework for addressing those challenges and underlined the important work that the Commission was carrying out in that connection.

37. At his briefing to the Security Council held in early February, the Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration underscored his optimism with respect to the country at a time when, after decades of political instability, the 2014 elections had brought a general sense of opportunity and forward impetus, despite well-known factors of continuing institutional fragility. The gains of stabilization suffered a serious setback in June, however, when differences between the President of Guinea-Bissau, José Mário Vaz, and the country's Prime Minister, Domingos Simões Pereira, resulted in the President's dismissing the Government over an alleged lack of concrete results in the implementation of reforms. A three-month-long impasse ensued until Carlos Correia was nominated as Prime Minister in September and the confirmation of his cabinet of ministers brought a sense of normality. During the stalemate, the Chair of the configuration raised his concerns to the Council regarding the impact of the political crisis and urged stakeholders to intensify their efforts to restore stability promptly.

38. In addressing the Security Council after visiting Bangui in May, the Chair of the Central African Republic configuration advocated for scaling up wider support for efforts to tackle pressing issues in the country, such as the weakness of the judicial system, and the need to strengthen governance structures and institutions, and to foster dialogue, inclusivity and reconciliation across the country. The absence of significant progress in those areas would continue to pose obstacles to maintaining progress in sustaining peace. In this regard, and while recognizing that the end of the transitional period was crucial for the future of the country, the Commission strongly emphasized the urgency of creating an environment conducive to the holding of elections. The Commission's position on the need for institution-building was supported through investments by the Peacebuilding Fund in the restoration of State authority and reconciliation.

39. In January, the Chair briefed the Security Council on Burundi and advised the Council to remain engaged, following the departure of the United Nations mission. During his visit to Burundi in November, the Chair briefed the Council from Bujumbura on the situation in the country — and at a critical moment inasmuch as the Council was preparing to adopt a resolution. He reiterated the Commission's call to end the ongoing violence and human rights violations; cautioned against inflammatory rhetoric; and expressed hope that the Government would engage in an inclusive and genuine dialogue process with the goal of restoring the trust of the people of Burundi. The Commission was backed in its advocacy for dialogue with financing from the Peacebuilding Fund for a variety of dialogue initiatives with civil society and women at the country level.

E. Develop a strategy to strengthen the gender perspective in country-specific engagement

40. To strengthen and operationalize its commitments on gender equality, as affirmed, for example, in the declaration of the members of the Commission on women's economic empowerment for peacebuilding of 26 September 2013 (PBC/7/OC/3), and ensure a more structural integration of gender aspects in its work, the Commission decided in the forward agenda set out in its report on the eighth session (para. 71) that in 2015, it would initiate a discussion on a strategy for mainstreaming a gender perspective in its country-specific engagement (hereinafter referred to as the "gender strategy"). The objective would be to strengthen the

Commission's engagement on gender-related aspects of peacebuilding in countries on its agenda and to provide for a framework for generating and disseminating knowledge in the area of women's participation in peacebuilding. Once elaborated through a consultative process and endorsed by the Commission, the strategy would help support the implementation of the commitments of the Secretary-General and Member States on gender-responsive peacebuilding.

41. The first phase of the development of the gender strategy was undertaken in late 2015: it aimed at capturing existing knowledge and practices in countries on the Commission's agenda through a light desk review which led to a brief series of case studies on the Commission's engagement on gender equality and women's empowerment. The key finding emanating from this first phase was that the Commission's engagement on gender issues, while uneven, has increased in recent years. All current instruments of engagement by the existing country configuration recognize, with varying degrees of emphasis, the role that women play in building peace. However, translating formal commitments into concrete action has not been systematic and often relies on the personal engagement of the Chair. At the same time, Commission field-level action, such as meetings with women civil society organizations and national leaders such as gender ministers, could also better feed into the work of the configurations and of the Commission at large. Strong gender capacities on the ground are also the condition for dedicated quality programming on gender and peacebuilding which can help turn policy commitments into action and has also proved capable of feeding into a greater strategic leverage of discussions on gender and peacebuilding. Some of the key entry points for the Commission's improvement of its work on gender equality and women's participation include: strengthening the integration of gender issues in all of the Commission's instruments of engagement and their reviews; regularizing in-country consultations with women from civil society and the national gender machinery; increasing the advocacy role of the Commission on the importance of dedicated gender expertise and funding at the country level; and facilitating regular briefings and provision of gender-sensitive analysis of country-specific situations to the Commission at global and country levels.

42. Following up on the desk review, the Commission agreed that a second phase of the development of the strategy will take place in 2016, on the basis of the country-based knowledge-building and analysis undertaken in 2015. The full-fledged strategy would identify a series of priority interventions for the Commission in its engagement on gender equality and women's participation at the country level, together with the key messages that should be systematically promoted by the Commission at both the global and the country level. The roll-out of the strategy is expected to begin in the third quarter of 2016.

F. Improve the working methods of the Commission

43. It has been increasingly recognized that, in order to allow for the active engagement and participation of each member of the Commission, there is a need for a predictable, transparent and long-term calendar of Commission meetings and activities. Therefore, at the first meeting of the Organizational Committee of the ninth session, the Chair, the Chairs of the configurations and the Chair of the Working Group on Lessons Learned presented the calendar of work of the Committee for the period extending up to August. A similar initiative was taken in

September by the Chair, who presented the workplan, extending until the end of the year, of the Organizational Committee and that of the Liberia configuration.

44. The Commission has also improved the quality of its flexible and light engagement by introducing ad hoc country-specific meetings within the framework of the Organizational Committee. In response to specific requests for advice from the Governments of Papua New Guinea, Burkina Faso and Somalia, the Commission convened three meetings which, by bringing together the country concerned, the membership of the Commission, regional actors and United Nations entities, demonstrated the relevance of the Commission as a broad-based platform for policy development.

45. The meeting on Papua New Guinea sought to highlight good practices arising from United Nations engagement in the country with the support of Peacebuilding Fund financing. In respect of key peacebuilding needs identified by the Government of Papua New Guinea, particularly in the area of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, the rapid provision of catalytic and responsive support enabled through funds allocated by the Fund was well recognized.

46. With respect to the Peacebuilding Fund, an informal discussion was held regarding the possibility that countries declared formally eligible by the Secretary-General to access the Fund would engage to varying degrees with the Organizational Committee. This engagement could take the form of an initial briefing on the motivations and plans of the country in terms of the peacebuilding assistance that it seeks, along with an occasional update.

47. The Commission provided an inclusive platform to the authorities of Burkina Faso for sharing their experiences with regard to the political transition in place following the popular uprising of 2014. It was noted that the priorities for the transitional Government included ensuring the continuity of the State, the organization of free and credible elections, social cohesion and national reconciliation. The representatives of Burkina Faso underlined, however, that the support of the international community for the upcoming elections and beyond would be crucial. Several participants noted that the meeting constituted a good example of how a more flexible Commission, which brings together national authorities, regional partners and United Nations actors, could lead to a noticeable improvement in the Commission's exercise of its advisory functions as related to the General Assembly and the Security Council.

48. The meeting on Somalia, which was organized as a follow-up to the second annual session of the Commission, offered an important opportunity to discuss the issue of predictable funding for peacebuilding through its focus on a concrete case study. The Commission discussed how pooled funding through the Multi-Partner Trust Fund, in cooperation with the World Bank and the African Development Bank, represented an important model of how to ensure coordination, reduce fragmentation and usher in sustainable peace. How the Peacebuilding Fund funded priority areas as identified by the government-led planning process was highlighted, as well as how a mechanism to pass funds directly through government accounts was developed. This mechanism, designed in explicit collaboration with the World Bank, provided the Government with the opportunity to demonstrate its capacity to manage funds, thus building confidence with other donors. The Commission noted that national ownership, solid national institutions and a strong leadership on the ground were essential.

49. Addressing the peacebuilding-related implications of the Ebola crisis represented another way in which the Commission can be engaged. The continued interaction among the Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone configurations throughout the Ebola crisis, under the leadership of the Chair of the Commission, had constituted an important platform, from the outset of and during the crisis, for discussing and raising international awareness on the impact of the Ebola outbreak on long-term peacebuilding.

50. The Commission further consolidated existing practices of meetings in different formats according to the content and scope of the issues being discussed. In some configurations, discussions at the technical level were used to prepare for ambassadorial-level meetings. The Commission also used informal settings to iron out issues and mobilize specialized inputs in the preparation of ambassadorial-level policy meetings.

G. Emerging cross-cutting issues

51. In November, the Commission convened a meeting on young people's role in sustaining peace, which provided an opportunity for Member States to exchange views on recent developments in the field of youth and peacebuilding, stemming from the thematic debate on the role of youth in countering violent extremism and promoting peace, organized by Jordan during its presidency of the Security Council in April 2015, and the Global Forum on Youth, Peace and Security, held in Amman in August 2015 and co-organized by the United Nations and partners from civil society organizations. At the meeting, the Commission was briefed by the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth on the outcomes of the Global Forum and the importance of recognizing the active role that young women and men play in building sustainable peace in their countries, often with little recognition or support. A young woman from Liberia, representing a youth-led peacebuilding organization, expressed her views on the challenges for young peacebuilders as they strove to secure a place at the peace table and achieve recognition as strategic partners rather than as members of implementing organizations, and on the continued lack of accessible funding for grass-roots youth organizations. The Amman Youth Declaration on Youth, Peace and Security, developed by over 10,000 young people, spells out young people's demand for a policy framework recognizing young peacebuilders' work and for greater programmatic and funding support.

52. States members of the Commission reflected on the active role that young people can and do play in their own countries and shared experiences regarding promising approaches. They expressed support for the work of young peacebuilders and affirmed the importance of high-level policy discussions on the role of young people in the efforts to achieve peace and security.

53. Institution-building as a key requirement for sustaining peace was another important focus of the Commission's work during the reporting period. Under the auspices of the Working Group on Lessons Learned, the Commission convened a number of discussions with a view to drawing lessons from the experience in countries on its agenda, as well as Afghanistan, on how the United Nations system could better support the strengthening of national institutions. The Commission's comparative strength lies in the long-term endeavour to lay the groundwork for sustaining peace. Focusing on the extension of State authority and the strengthening

of political institutions as being the specific challenges of institution-building, the Commission drew a number of lessons on how to better support institution-building in post-conflict countries, on how to further develop partnerships between the United Nations and international and regional financial institutions, and on the role of the Commission in that connection. The Commission placed particular emphasis on the fact that institution-building should be rooted in inclusive political agreements based on strong national ownership and inclusivity, which required time and adequate financial, political and technical support. This emphasis both derives from and inspires the continued investments of the Peacebuilding Fund in these areas, for example, through support for the security sector and public administration in the Central African Republic, support for the redeployment of State authority and national human rights institutions in Burundi, support for the rule of law in Liberia and support for local political dialogue in countries that are not Commission members such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

54. With regard to the extension of State authority, provision of law and order through, for example, the justice system, the police and correctional services, and provision of basic services to citizens by State institutions and establishment of trust between the State and the population, were all strongly interlinked. With regard to the rebuilding of political institutions, decision-making processes needed to be carried out based on good governance through fair elections and inclusive reconciliation. In connection with both, inclusivity was an indispensable element needed to ensure sustainable peace; and in this regard, inclusion of civil society, inter alia, youth groups, was crucial. In the discussion of the Working Group on Lessons Learned on institution-building, some members of the Commission also stressed the importance of conflict prevention and addressing of root causes at the earliest possible stage, as well as the need to integrate a gender perspective into all aspects of institution-building. In addressing how the international community could better support national authorities in strengthening their institutions, the Commission noted that the United Nations system needed to move towards a more coordinated and coherent approach, working with international financial institutions and, most importantly, regional and subregional organizations. The Commission was recognized as an important actor which could bring together a broad range of actors, ranging from Member States to regional organizations and the civil society, and strengthen support to missions and in non-mission settings. Based on the discussions conducted during the year, the Working Group put together a report on institution-building: the challenges for the United Nations system (information available at the Peacebuilding Commission website).

55. In view of developments in countries on the Commission's agenda, and building on the discussions convened by the Commission in 2014, the issue of transitions has become increasingly relevant for the country-specific work of the Commission. In Liberia, with the ongoing drawdown of UNMIL, and as the country had entered a new phase of peace consolidation aimed towards sustainable peace, the Commission invited the Secretary-General to make recommendations on an updated framework of engagement between the Commission and the Government (see PBC/9/LBR/2).

56. In Sierra Leone, consultations on the Commission's mode and type of engagement in line with its own transition plan evolved before and during the United Nations transition process. These discussions were overshadowed by the critical need for the Government and the international community to focus on the

immediate health crisis and find a long-term response to the Ebola outbreak. The latter was achieved through the collective and joint efforts of the Chair of the Commission and the configurations of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

III. Conclusions and agenda going forward

57. The next reporting period for the Commission will coincide with the implementation of the comprehensive review of the peacebuilding architecture led by the General Assembly and the Security Council. The Commission will consider the practical ways in which it could implement the recommendations and decisions reflected in any of the resolutions that may be adopted in this regard by the Assembly and the Council. At the same time, and without prejudging the outcome of the review, the Commission will continue to pursue several important work streams which could further strengthen its country-specific and policy-related engagements.

Follow-up to the 2015 review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture

58. Following the completion of the intergovernmental phase of the review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture, the Commission, together with the Peacebuilding Support Office, will reflect upon how to improve its working methods in line with recommendations.

Action

- The Organizational Committee will convene informal discussions on how to take forward the outcomes of the review of the peacebuilding architecture. These informal discussions will elaborate on suggestions for concrete reforms of the work of the Commission and its role in sustaining peace, following up on the work initiated during its ninth session.

Follow-up to the second annual session and preparation of the third annual session (June 2016)

59. The follow-up to the second annual session will be carried forward in 2016. The follow-up exercise will guide the Commission's preparation for the third annual session, including on the selection of a theme that would help further elaborate on the identified policy areas requiring further development.

Action

- The Organizational Committee will convene informal discussions with the participation of interested members, relevant United Nations entities, international financial institutions, regional organizations and development banks.
- These informal discussions will explore those specific policy areas requiring further elaboration during the third annual session.

Integrate the perspectives of regional actors

60. The Commission will continue to place particular emphasis on engaging and collaborating with regional actors in policy-related and country-specific activities.

Action

- The Organizational Committee will consult with the African caucus in follow-up to the visit undertaken by the Chair and the Chairs of the Burundi, Central African Republic and Guinea-Bissau configurations to African Union headquarters on 26 November 2014. The purpose of the follow-up will be to ensure that the agreed areas of policy-related and country-specific collaboration are activated.
- The Organizational Committee will continue to discuss proposals on how to forge more effective partnerships and coherence between African regional actors, in particular the regional economic communities, the United Nations and international financial institutions.
- The country configurations will continue to engage its members from Africa, including through but not limited to the African caucus, the African Union, ECOWAS and the Mano River Union, in support of the agreed peacebuilding priorities and objectives for each country on the agenda.

Focus and sustain attention on the long-term impacts of the Ebola outbreak

61. The Commission will continue to monitor and raise awareness on the impact of the Ebola outbreak on peacebuilding, including in the areas of security, local governance, political institutions, social cohesion and economic recovery, taking into consideration a comprehensive, regional and longer-term approach.

Action

- The Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone configurations will continue to explore how to best support the efforts of the countries, the United Nations and the international community, based on national and regional priority areas for each country and subregion during the post-Ebola recovery period, particularly through the implementation of their Ebola recovery plans and longer-term national plans.
- The three configurations will continue to update the members of the Organizational Committee periodically on the results of its advocacy and accompanied efforts, and will explore the need for collective messaging from the Commission, including through statements, as appropriate.

Improve the advisory function with regard to and the modality of interaction with the General Assembly and the Security Council

62. The Commission will explore means to improve its advisory function with regard to the General Assembly and the Security Council.

Action

- The Organizational Committee will draw upon the main findings of the stocktaking exercise, undertaken in 2015, of its advisory function with regard to the Security Council and consider practical ways in which to implement the recommendations. To this end, the Committee will designate one of the Commission's members on the Council to succeed Malaysia in coordinating the periodic stocktaking exercise.
- The Chair will coordinate with the presidency of the Security Council in preparation for the convening of the fifth informal interactive dialogue, which can be held in conjunction with the upcoming annual briefing to the Council on the present report.
- The Chairs of relevant country configurations will continue to ensure that upon the request of the Security Council, their periodic formal briefings to the Council on the countries concerned will be synchronized with the timing of their field visits and will be focused on specific areas to which the Council's attention has been drawn.

Finalize and implement the strategy to strengthen the gender perspective in country-specific engagement

63. The Commission will continue to carry forward the development of a practical approach to its thematic focus on women's participation in peacebuilding.

Action

- The Organizational Committee will finalize and implement the gender strategy to assist in integrating a gender perspective into its country-specific engagement, within the framework of performing its three core functions.

Improve the working methods

64. The Commission will continue to explore possible improvements in outstanding areas of its working methods which would enhance the clarity of its objectives and the predictability of its calendar and activities.

Action

- Starting in mid-February 2016, the Organizational Committee will share an indicative calendar, timeline and progress in the implementation of the actions stipulated in this forward agenda.
- By mid-February 2016, the Commission will share basic outlines and planned activities on country-specific and thematic objectives and activities for the year.
- By 30 June 2016, the Chair will initiate the process described in the aide-memoire circulated to the Organizational Committee on 3 December, which indicates important steps to be taken to ensure that election to the membership of the Organizational Committee has been completed, with no delays, by the beginning of each session.